

Sustainability | Individual communication

IC - (21075) - VALUING THE DYNAMIC STABILITY OF SALTMARSHES FOR HUMAN HEALTH AND WELLBEING: LIMINALITY, AMBIGUITY, AND THE EVER-CHANGING QUALITIES OF INTERTIDAL HABITATS

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Background and objectives

- In a world facing a dual crisis of climate and biodiversity, a growing priority is how to better understand human-environment relations and the wellbeing benefits they might bring.
- Coasts in particular are experiencing increasing pressures due to climate change, sea-level rise and human development, and intertidal habitats such as saltmarshes are especially vulnerable. Whilst these liminal spaces are increasingly recognised in coastal management for a variety of benefits, including coastal protection, flood regulation and carbon sequestration, little is known about how people relate to them, or their importance for non-material aspects of human wellbeing. There is a need to better understand how saltmarshes are valued and how these values influence -and are influenced by- the ways in which people interact with places and gain wellbeing from them.

Process and methods (for empirical research)

A bespoke multi-modal qualitative methodology (including mobile and visual methods) was employed to draw out intangible environmental values in relation to saltmarshes at two case study estuaries in Wales (UK) as part of the wider interdisciplinary CoastWEB project.

Main results (or main arguments in the case of critical reviews)

Saltmarshes do not have one obvious meaning – they are ambiguous and open to more than one interpretation. This ambiguousness is related to the ways in which people relate to them. Our approach enabled us to gain insights on situated understandings of local environmental change in relation to more global ecological risk and matters of wellbeing and health, providing further insights. Participants at both case-sites deeply valued the sense of what we term "dynamic stability" gained from interacting with saltmarshes and the wider coast.

Implications for research and practice/policy | Importance and originality of the contribution

Saltmarshes are places of exclusive, privileged human-nature relationships. Individual capabilities to use them do not come easily and future management will need to consider the liminality, ambiguity, and the ever-changing qualities of intertidal habitats if adopting what Fischer and Eastwood (2016: 49) describe as 'targeted measures to increase capabilities'.

Palavras-chave : saltmarshes, people environment relations, global risk, local cultural values, qualitative research, multimodal study

